configuring said franking imprint of said postage meter machine prior to use at a use location remote from said manufacturing location for at least one of a selected carrier and a selected country, by communicating with said postage meter machine via said interface, to select at least one of said permanently programmed carrier-specific data and country-specific from said non-removable memory data.

Claim 3 has been amended as follows:

3. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 2 comprising storing said set of data in said non-removeable memory of said postage meter machine in a non-erasable manner at said manufacturing location, and subsequently selecting among said of different carrier-specific data by communicating via said interface with a country-specific chip card inserted into said chip card reader, and setting an inhibit bit in said non-volatile memory after removing said chip card to prevent any further configuration of said postage meter machine.

Claim 4 has been amended as follows:

4. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein said chip card makes both a carrier-specific selection among said different carrier specific data and a country-specific selection among said different country-specific data.

Please cancel claim 8.

Claim 9 has been amended as follows:

9. (Amended) An arrangement for entering contents of a franking imprint into a postage meter machine comprising:

a chip card reader adapted to receive a chip card therein containing selection data;

a franking imprint memory into which data representing a franking imprint are loadable;

a microprocessor connected to said chip card reader;

a permanently installed non-volatile memory connected to said microprocessor, said non-volatile memory containing memory areas in which different carrier-specific data and different country specific data are stored; and

said microprocessor receiving said selection data from a chip card inserted in said chip card reader and loading at least one of carrier-specific data and country-specific data into said franking imprint memory from said non-volatile memory dependent on said selection data to configure said franking imprint and thereafter inhibiting said franking imprint memory to prevent any further configuration thereof.

claims 1-9 are submitted to be patentable over the teachings of the above references, for the following reasons.

As explained in the introductory portion of the present specification, the franking imprint which is printed by a franking machine must include, according to most Governmental postal regulations, country-specific data, and may also include carrier-specific information. Moreover, at least the country-specific information in the franking imprint must not be able to be altered by a user or a customer of the franking machine, otherwise the franking imprint would not conform to the relevant Governmental regulations in the country of use of the franking machine.

Conventionally, therefore, the configuration of the franking imprint (i.e. the entry of data into the franking imprint memory which is used by the digital printer to print the franking imprint) has either been permanently programmed into a memory in the franking machine at the location of manufacture, or the machine has been configured by a dealer in the country of use, after the franking machine has been shipped from the manufacturer to the dealer. Such configuration by a dealer either takes place at the dealer's main facility, or by a service technician at the time the franking machine is installed at a customer's location. If the franking machine is configured at the manufacturer's location, this means that the manufacturer must maintain an inventory of a large number of franking machines respectively configured for a large number of different countries (or at least the number of countries in which the manufacturer does business). Configuring the franking machine at the dealer's facility, or on-site at the customer's location, is time-consuming and labor intensive, and thus adds to overhead costs.

The present invention avoids this problem by storing, at the manufacturer's location at the time a franking machine is manufactured, different sets of data respectively for configuring the franking imprint in different countries, and different sets of data for respectively configuring the franking imprint for different carriers. Such data are stored in a non-removable, non-volatile memory in the franking machine. Since every franking machine contains all of the necessary data for (potentially) being configured for any country and any carrier, every franking machine which is maintained in inventory is identical. When a franking machine is to be shipped to a particular country, it is configured for that country by selecting the appropriate country-specific data stored in the non-volatile memory and loading that data from the non-volatile memory into the franking memory. The franking memory is then inhibited so that it cannot be further configured after it leaves the manufacturer.

In a preferred embodiment, this selection takes place by inserting a chip card reader of the franking machine. The chip card, however, does not contain the actual country-specific data (this data, as noted above, having been permanently stored in the memory of the franking machine itself). Instead, the chip card contains only selection data which selects the appropriate country-specific data from among the already-stored different sets of country-specific data. The same procedure can be undertaken, if desired, for selecting carrier-specific data to configure the franking imprint.

By this method and apparatus, the manufacturer is relieved of having to maintain and track a large number of differently configured franking machines in inventory, and the dealer is relieved from having to configure each franking machine

upon its arrival at the dealer or upon its installation at a customer. Moreover, since in the preferred embodiment, the chip card contains only selection data, there is no need to store an extensive amount of data on the card.

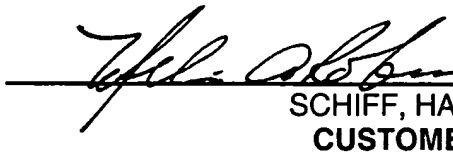
In all of the references cited by the Examiner, a chip card is inserted into a processor, such a processor in a franking machine, to configure a memory accessible by the processor, but in all instances of the references cited by the Examiner, data are actually loaded into the memory in question from the chip card via the processor. In other words, in all of the references cited by the Examiner, the chip card itself contains the data which are to be loaded into the processor memory. There is no suggestion or teaching in any of the references to previously store all of the necessary sets of data in the device containing the processor, and then to only select from among the previously-stored data by inserting the chip card, as disclosed and claimed in the present application.

Independent method claim 1 has been amended to make clear that a selection is made from among different sets of previously-stored data in order to configure the franking imprint, and independent apparatus claim 9 has been amended to include the same limitations, with the added requirement of the use of a chip card containing the aforementioned selection data. Chip card usage is set forth in the method claims in the dependent claims.

None of the references relied upon by the Examiner discloses or suggests such a method or an apparatus, and therefore none of claims 1-9 is anticipated or rendered obvious by the teachings of any of the references of record.

All claims of the application are therefore submitted to be in condition for allowance, and early reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Submitted by,



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